19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
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643 their return journey to Akurwa some weeks later. The *reth* himself remained up on the mound, while the crowds dispersed to their homes or sat about drinking and chatting round the houses of Fashoda.

(W.P.G.T.)

The final ceremonies on 15th. March consisted of a general assembly of all important chiefs and elders from all over the Shilluk country. Speeches were made, mostly of exhortation. The *reth* was confirmed [693] as supreme judge of the Shilluk people; and finally he was ceremonially shown round Fashoda by the chief of the Kwa Nyikang stopping at each house in turn.

The scene was laid in the open space south of Aturwic, and all [202] the chiefs had been summoned by drum in the early morning. At [778] the bottom of the mound we noticed the *kwom* (sacred stool), draped in white cloth as before; two spears, one wrapped in cloth, were held by bearers, one on each side of the *kwom*, and a small kettle-drum shaped like a basin, the property of the Kwa Wung who live mostly round Detwok, was set on the ground close by with its drummer. The lancebearers and the drummer were all from Kwa Wung.

Facing this stage were the assembled chiefs and elders of the Shilluk, with no conspicuous absentees, each one sitting down holding a spear. There was a clear space of some ten yards between the *kwom* and the chiefs.

In front of the entrance to the huts on Aturwic there was a sheep held tethered. Shortly the *reth* emerged from the huts followed by a group of women, wives and sisters: he and his important entourage were dressed in white with Mrs. Gray skins over the garments.

After stepping over the tethered sheep, the *reth* was led down [544] the slope by the chief of the Kwa Nyikang. His retainers followed him, and most of them stepped over the sheep too; when he reached [293] the bottom of the slope he was lifted on to the sacred stool, and sat facing the chiefs with his retainers grouped behind him: immediately

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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in a leopard skin for a dance. Apart from these privileges, however, the son or grandson of a king is in no other way distinguished; he must undertake the menial tasks which fall to the lot of the boys of the village, the herding of the cows and sheep, the milking and the cleaning of the byre; he submits to the same ordeal of tattooing and cannot anticipate his initiation dance, the great coming-of-age celebration, by which he and others of his age-group formally become full members of the tribe. He is accorded a special respect, and if he is a Nyireth, a son of the king, is eligible for election to the high office of king of his people. The fifth generation of the king's descendants, though they are allowed to retain the title of Kwanyireth, descendants of the king, merge into the common people and are treated as such.

The second class is that of the Ororo, which holds a peculiar position in the social system. Its members are of royal blood, but are for ever debarred from election to the kingship. Shilluk history relates that of the fifth king, Ocalo, all the sons of his first wife were slain in battle with the Nuer, save one. This was a puny boy whom his father despised as unfit to be king. In his grief and rage at the loss of his sons, Ocalo threw the sacred spears of Nyikang into the river to signify that he considered his house at an end, since he had now no son worthy of succeeding him. The son who was left, Duad by name, upbraided his father fiercely, and swore that if ever he became king he would disinherit and degrade the other children of Ocalo. Eventually he did become king, and kept to his oath. His half-brothers were all *degraded to the level of commoners, but because of their* undoubted royal ancestry they formed a special clan among the other royal clans. To compensate them for the loss of their rank they were given, and still hold, special functions at the installation and burial ceremonies of the king. They used also to hold the office of royal executioners and put to death all those who fell under the king's displeasure, but in these more enlightened times, that office is no longer required.

The third class is that of the Colo. Strictly speaking this

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691 but he now makes it plain that he wouldn't have her as a
583 gift, and indeed has made overtures to another lady, so
422 please may he have his cattle and—just to make things a little more complicated—the calves that they have had, and can he have them at once since his new prospective father-in-law is getting a little nasty about the lack of dowry, and hinting that his daughter's affections may easily be bestowed elsewhere. 'Not quite so fast,' says number two, 'those cows are mine and mine only and quite obviously their calves are mine too, so kindly arrange for the immediate delivery of the same.' Father pours ridicule and scorn on both claimants to the calves. It is true, he admits, that both young men have some sort of a claim to cattle—which he will settle by and by when he gets a bid for his youngest daughter at present crawling round the floor—but for either of them to claim the calves is preposterous; surely they belong to him who has had all the trouble of herding the beasts; to his skill and industry in nursing the cows through the difficult time of calving is due the fact that there are any calves at all! And so the arguments and counter arguments, taunts, recriminations, insults and threats will be tossed back and forth. Tempers will rise and maybe sticks will be flourished and spears flashed. It can happen that one of the parties will work himself into a blind passion and regardless
[682] of the consequences may break his adversary's skull or thrust his spear into him, but generally, fear of reprisals from the clansmen of his opponent and the justice that will certainly be meted out to him by the white man in Malakal, should he survive long enough to be arrested, advises caution; and since none of the contestants is strong enough to take by force what he considers to be his by right, the dis-
[634] pute is eventually, albeit reluctantly, brought up before the district chief.

695 Reluctantly, I say, because the litigants know full well
• 693 that whoever is going to lose by the decision of the court, the judge isn't. The plaintiff may marshal his facts with unassailable logic, clothe them in masterly oratory, and present them with crystal clear lucidity. He and his witnesses may even

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be telling the truth, and therefore be quite unimpeachable, but he is aware that if the verdict is given in his favour it will be, not so much because of the justice of his claim and his forensic skill in presenting it, but rather because he has promised the judge a bigger 'fee' than his opponent has.

Among the Shilluk the Christian precept of forgiveness of one's enemy does not obtain, but they follow rather the old Jewish principle of retribution for injuries inflicted, and although they will not literally demand 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth', there is a recognized scale of payment for all such injuries. The penalty for knocking a tooth out is especially severe, the aggressor having to pay the injured party a cow. For an offence against an unmarried girl, her father will claim three cows, and for adultery the fine is four cows. Woe betide the offender who refuses to pay up; he will be wise to keep clear of the district in which the injured party lives, for the relatives of the latter will most surely wreak their vengeance on his person. In the case of homicide, blood payment of ten or more cattle is demanded, quite apart from any penalty that the law may inflict, but sometimes the grief-stricken relatives of the dead person will fulfil quite literally the commandment 'The kinsman of him that was slain shall kill the murderer' (Num. 35: 19), and if perchance he is already in custody and out of their reach will exact vengeance on one of his male relatives. Then the family of the second victim will strive to vindicate their manhood by a raid on the other village and more killings may take place and the feud develop into a minor war, till such time as police can be got to the place and the culprits are arrested.

A grim instance of vendetta occurred in the Lul district a few years ago. A quarrel arose among some youths, tempers rose, a blow was struck and the unlucky recipient died. The aggressor was arrested and sent to Malakal for trial, but a few days later his home was raided and his father murdered as he sat defenceless at his supper. Before police could arrive from Kodok or Malakal, the village of the dead youth was